

West Virginia Writers' Project

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R.W Brown Arbovale. W.Va.

Benton Smith. Millpoint. W.Va.



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merce And Industry. Samuel G Smith. Hillsboro. W. Va. Pocahontas County.

The first tannery or old time Tan Yard of much size was erected by

James Smith who came to Pocahontas County from the state of Virginia and near Staunton, he having learned the tanners trade there and set out across the Allegheny mountain for a country suitable for the location of a tannery the site he chose was along the Seneca Indian trail and later became known as Millpoint and it was at this point that he stopped rigged up a corn mill and a Tan Yard this was about 1828 to 30 and the tannery was located between Stamping Creek and the foot of the hill near the C.M Wallace residence and it was here that James Smith put into practice what he had learned in Va. as he had learned the tanners trade there from an old tanner with years of experience.

From this James Smith to 1941 we have had four generations of Smiths that were tanners Isaac a son of James had a tanyard, his son Edgar followed his ancestors and he too was a tanner and today we find his son Benton with an up to date tannery on Route 219 near the Marvin Chapel Church and the Ruckman Schoolhouse, the building is a cement block structure with concrete vats, his output of finished leather is between 350 and 450 hides a year some of which are tanned with the hair on while the rest are made into leather of one kind and another as most of the deer hides are bought by craftsman who make leather goods by hand as some of them are made into leather jackets that are known as the buckskin jacket. Most of the Smith Tannery leather is bought by makers of high priced le-

Force And Industry. ^{-- Tannery--} Samuel G Smith Hillsboro. W. Va. Pocahontas County.

goods as they prefer the slow process tanning as it takes 6 months to tan hide and some longer, the bark used is a local product as he uses Chestnut Oak bark that is dried and ground in a crude grinding machine of his own make using parts of an old grinder used by his grandfather ~~the~~ late Isaac Smith, that had a tan yard on the Greenbrier River between Watoga and the mouth of Stamping Creek, this yard was built by James Smith after he left Millpoint about 1860.

James Smith had 5 boys of these 3 were tanners Isaac, Jacob and Joseph William was a harness and saddle maker and Pleas was a doctor, Isaac operating at his fathers yard on the river, Jacob had a tan yard at Edray and Joseph S. had a tan yard on his farm in the glade pasture near his residence now occupied by E.P Kramer.

Most of the leather tanned by the Smiths was either made up into shoes or put into harness and saddles however some of the leather was bought for use elsewhere in the state by shoemakers and harness makers.

#2 Another tan yard of notice was built and run by the late George R Curry and Ellis McCarty of the Levels District it was built on the Curry farm on a small stream that finally sank into the mountain near the Poor Farm, this is on the road leading to Beard and Denmar the Curry farm is now owned by Richard McCarty. Curry was a shoemaker by trade therefore had a ready market for his leather by making it into shoes and selling them at that time most men wore boots and Curry was known for his long wearing shoes and boots, besides the leather he

made into harness and repair work on shoes harness. This tannery was being operated in the 80s and early 90s.

Often times the vats were visited when the leather was ready to come out to be worked and finished these visitors always picked the best side of leather they could find, the tanner would miss his leather but very seldom knew where it went as this always took place at night this got to be a regular practice and no doubt caused some of these tan yards to cease operation all these tan yards were in Little Levels District but the one operated by Jacob Smith at Edray.

3 The first tannery or old time tan Yard of any size in the upper end of the county was near Greenbank where first class upper and sole leather was made by Charles P Brown this was about 1850 he operated here for a time but sold out and moved over on North Fork and located another tannery this tannery was kept in operation until about 1870 when he quit the tanners trade and followed stonemason work the rest of his life, his old homestead is now owned by his grand son Walter Brown.

Shortly after this tannery went out of business George Curry started a tan yard in the town of Greenbank he operated here for a time and moved to Little Levels District not far from Hillsboro and opened up a tan yard leaving the one at Greenbank to his brother Jas. H Curry who operated it for years using his finished leather in shoes and harness.

About 1889 S. J Sutton, F. C Sutton and O. W Ruckman formed a partner-